

STUDENTS' CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (MHQ) MUSABAQAH HIFDZIL QUR'AN

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Abstract

The moral degradation affecting the current generation of students demands that Islamic educational institutions optimize character development not only through compulsory academic pathways but also through applicable self-development programs. The phenomenon of deviant behavior indicates that classroom learning routines often fail to transform into essential spiritual awareness. This study aims to analyze the implementation, role, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors of the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an (MHQ) extracurricular program in shaping student morals at MTs Central Jakarta. The researcher applied a qualitative approach with a case study design through data collection techniques of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies of the madrasah principal, supervising teachers, and active students. Field results revealed empirical facts that the MHQ routine every weekend is able to develop student character through the application of methods of habituating discipline, instructor exemplary behavior, and consistent practice of murajaah. Program participants showed a very prominent positive transformation in the form of increased verbal politeness, personal responsibility, and emotional calm when compared with a group of non-participating students. The study's conclusions confirm that intensive, routine interaction with the sacred text of the Quran successfully produces graduates with noble character on a sustainable basis.

Keywords: Extracurricular Activities, Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an, Religious Extracurricular



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INTRODUCTION

National education, as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003, aims to develop the potential of students to become people of faith, piety, and noble character. This noble goal places moral education as a primary pillar in producing a quality young generation (Sutarja, 2024). Building good character is essential to ensure that students not only excel academically but also possess moral integrity. Religious education plays a crucial role in instilling these values from an early age (Wibisono, 2026).

Islamic educational institutions, particularly madrasas, have a significant responsibility in carrying out this moral education function. Today's society and families tend to entrust much of the responsibility for their children's religious and moral education to schools, particularly Islamic Religious Education teachers. (Safrianti, 2024) These high expectations require madrasas to create an environment conducive to moral development, both through intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Creating a culturally religious environment is a key strategy in shaping positive habits in students (Green, 2026).

Religious-based extracurricular activities are an effective way to internalize Islamic values. Programs such as Quran recitation, Dhuha prayer, and Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an (MHQ) are held to broaden students' understanding and familiarize them with religious practices. Through these practices, it is hoped that strong social sensitivity and religiosity will emerge in students (Kosim, 2024).

The Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an (MHQ) is not just a competition for memorization, but also a means of spiritual development. Rahmawati, (2024) In Quran-Based Character Education, intensive interaction with the Quran through memorization encourages students to understand and practice noble values such as honesty, perseverance, and discipline. This activity trains concentration, patience, and responsibility, which are essential foundations of noble character.

The implementation of Quranic values through activities such as MHQ is expected to protect students from negative environmental influences. From a behavioral perspective, morality is a form of behavior that is habituated and repeated until it becomes a permanent character trait. Therefore, routine and structured extracurricular activities are believed to be able to shape behavioral patterns that align with the goals of Islamic education (State, 2024).

The moral degradation currently occurring among students demonstrates that efforts to foster morality in educational institutions still face significant challenges. Despite the implementation of various religious programs, impolite behavior, low discipline, and a lack of responsibility are still common in schools. Exposure to social media, popular culture, and an unsupportive environment often erode the positive values instilled in madrasas (Sulhan, 2023).

The implementation of the MHQ extracurricular activities at MTsS Central Jakarta, although ongoing, still faces several operational and conceptual challenges. Limited time outside of class hours makes the coaching process less than optimal. Furthermore, minimal support from the social environment outside the school, including a lack of parental involvement, can hinder the program's effectiveness.

Another challenge lies in the orientation of some students participating in MHQ activities. Many still view these activities solely as a way to improve their memorization skills and achieve success in competitions. Applying the values contained in the Quran to their daily behavior and lives is often not the primary focus of their participation (Mustofa, 2025).

This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideal goals of MHQ activities and the reality of their implementation in the field. The theory of habituation from Mansour, (2025) He

states that habits are persistent and automatic ways of acting, which initially require enlightenment to prevent them from becoming meaningless routines. Without a clear integration between memorization and understanding of values, MHQ activities risk producing only cognitive abilities without a significant impact on the formation of noble character.

Considering the urgency of character education in the modern era, research on the effectiveness of MHQ extracurricular activities in fostering morals is very important (Sánchez-Camacho, 2024). MHQ activities must be returned to their essence, not merely as a competition, but as a strategic instrument for internalizing religious values into students' daily lives. A comprehensive understanding of how Quranic values are instilled through these activities will provide practical guidance for educational institutions (Muravsky, 2026).

This study aims to analyze in-depth the implementation and role of MHQ activities in moral development at MTsS Central Jakarta. The exploration will focus on the development patterns, methods used, and an evaluation of the impact of these activities on changing student behavior. Furthermore, this study will identify factors that support and hinder this development process.

Ibn Sina's Islamic educational theory emphasizes that morality is the source of everything and religious education must function as a tool for forming noble morality (Fernandes, 2026). Through a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research seeks to provide theoretical and practical contributions regarding how MHQ activities can be optimally managed. The research findings are expected to serve as a reference for schools, educators, and parents in designing holistic and sustainable character education strategies (Syarifah, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research design uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach explores the phenomenon of student moral development in a naturalistic and holistic manner. The researcher directly observed the extracurricular activities of the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an in the madrasah or school environment. This design allows the researcher to understand the process of internalizing moral values in depth. The qualitative approach prioritizes understanding the meaning of each social interaction during the program (Suraijjah, 2025).

Research Target/Subject

The study subjects included individuals directly involved in the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an program. The researchers selected subjects using purposive sampling based on the criteria of understanding and active involvement. The primary target groups included the principal, extracurricular teachers, and student participants. The principal provided information regarding character development policies. The teachers explained the implementation methods. Students were the primary target group for the study to measure the program's direct impact on daily moral changes.

Research Procedure

The research procedure consists of preparation, implementation, and reporting stages. The preparation stage includes developing a study design, obtaining permits, and developing supporting instruments. The implementation stage requires researchers to go directly into the field to record extracurricular activities. Researchers interact with participants to explore the dynamics of moral development contextually. The reporting stage involves compiling field

findings into a systematic scientific narrative. This process prioritizes researcher objectivity in recording each event (Rabiman, 2023).

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The researcher acted as the primary instrument in gathering information from the field. Data collection relied on three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The researcher used an interview guide to explore teachers' and students' perspectives in a focused manner (Brewer, 2025). Observation guidelines facilitated direct observation of student behavior during Quran memorization activities. Researchers collected documentation in the form of activity notes, school profiles, and student attendance records. These three techniques created source triangulation to ensure data validity.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis refers to an interactive model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Researchers begin their analysis by reducing the data to select and focus on important information from the field. They discard information that is irrelevant to the focus of moral development (Waldman, 2023). The second stage presents data in the form of narrative text or a simple matrix. This presentation makes it easier for researchers to map patterns of student behavior change. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and verifying them. Researchers re-examine the preliminary findings with new empirical evidence in the field to formulate final conclusions (Stodolska, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MTs Central Jakarta operates as a private junior high school in the Senen District. This institution holds A accreditation according to Decree Number 417/BAP-S/M/DKI/2016 issued on September 16, 2016. The madrasah management provides various supporting facilities such as internet access to support the smooth and optimal teaching and learning process.

The teaching and administrative staff at this madrasah play a crucial role in running the school organization. These professional human resources total 37 people, divided into 30 subject teachers and 7 administrative staff. Table 1 summarizes the detailed composition of the staff serving at MTs Central Jakarta.

Table 1. Number of Educators and Educational Staff at MTs Central Jakarta

Information	Amount
Teacher	30
Tendik (Education Personnel)	7
Total	37

Students at MTs Central Jakarta are divided into three academic grade levels for the current academic year. The total population is 443, with 163 students in grade VII, 134 in grade VIII, and 146 in grade IX. Table 2 presents a detailed demographic distribution of students by grade level and gender.

Table 2. Number of Students at MTs Central Jakarta

Class	Man	Woman	Amount
VII	100	63	163
VIII	57	77	134
IX	65	81	146

Total	222	221	443
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The quantitative ratio between teaching staff and students indicates a proportional educational service structure for a secondary madrasah. Thirty teachers with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are responsible for the academic work of 443 students each day. The availability of adequate instructors is crucial for the successful delivery of the curriculum to all students in the classroom.

The seventh-grade enrollment rate is the highest among all grades. The 163 new students at the beginning of the year reflect the high level of trust the local community has in the quality of education at MTs Central Jakarta. This public enthusiasm aligns with the institution's strong accreditation status.

The gender balance at this madrasah is evident in the ratio of 222 male to 221 female students. This even ratio creates a healthy social interaction ecosystem for the psychosocial development of junior high school-aged adolescents. This equal environment provides an ideal space for implementing a variety of self-development activities, including moral-building religious extracurricular activities.

The school's physical facilities include 32 different types of classrooms, including 12 classrooms, a library, and a prayer room. Complete audiovisual equipment, such as 12 projectors and a sound system, also supports the smooth transfer of knowledge within the madrasah. The presence of prayer facilities facilitates students' direct involvement in religious practices outside of formal classroom hours.

The school's management manages the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an program through an annual competition and weekly extracurricular coaching. This regular event takes place every Saturday to help students develop their memorization skills. The activity structure incorporates directed coaching, interactive discussions, and practical skills training for participants.

Every Saturday, the series of activities runs systematically, following the school's schedule. The extracurricular activities begin at 7:30 a.m. with an opening roll call, followed by a MHQ memorization session, material presentation, and an evaluation at 12:00 p.m. Table 3 details the MHQ extracurricular activities.

Table 3. MHQ Extracurricular Schedule on Saturdays

Time	Activity Agenda
07.30 - 08.00	Roll call and opening of activities
08.00 - 10.00	MHQ Activities
10.00 - 10.15	Rest
10.15 - 11.30	Coaching and practice materials
11.30 - 12.00	Evaluation and closing

The availability of a prayer room on the school grounds plays a vital role in maintaining a religious atmosphere throughout the training process. This spiritual facility provides the quiet space MHQ participants absolutely need to recite holy verses without external distractions. This supporting infrastructure demonstrates the school's commitment to concretely realizing its vision of developing a generation with Islamic personalities.

The four-and-a-half-hour allocation each weekend demonstrates the school's commitment to intensive character development. This timeframe carefully divides the activity between pure

memorization practice and the absorption of moral material from the accompanying teachers. A schedule that includes breaks is highly effective in preventing mental fatigue in students as they strive to meet their reading quota.

The evaluation phase at the end of the agenda serves as a validation instrument for the development of students' cognitive and behavioral capacities throughout the day. This session provides space for instructors to refine tajwid precision and provide corrections regarding participants' manners during the exercise. Regular evaluations ensure the quality of memorization and the ongoing monitoring of students' moral transformation.

The weekly memorization practice routine has yielded a series of academic achievements recorded in various inter-school competitions. Delegations of MTs students from Central Jakarta regularly achieve outstanding results in city-wide Madrasah Tsanawiyah Working Group (KKMTs) competitions. Table 4 documents the list of students who have achieved championship records in these MHQ competitions.

Table 4. List of MHQ Participants' Achievements

Participant Name	Class	Champion Predicate	Competition Level		Date/Year
Tasya Syahfitri	7C	First Place	KKMTs	throughout	December 8, 2025
			Central Jakarta		
Muhammad Yahya Annawawi	9C	Second Place	KKMTs	throughout	December 16, 2024
			Central Jakarta		
Ardian Rahman	9D	Third Place	KKMTs	throughout	February 17, 2023
			Central Jakarta		
Muhammad Rizki Awwaludin	8B	Third Place	KKMTs	throughout	December 8, 2025
			Central Jakarta		

Tasya Syahfitri's success in reaching the top podium in 2025 represents the pinnacle of the school's extracurricular mentoring program's effectiveness. The track record of similar victories achieved by other participants since 2023 underscores the consistent quality of this program's coaching over time. Achievement recaps confirm the strong correlation between the intensity of Saturday morning practice and students' mental competitive readiness.

This championship title has the dual benefit of validating memorization and motivating their juniors. The tradition of winning competitions fosters a healthy competitive climate among extracurricular participants, encouraging them to continually improve their reading skills. These individual victories, in aggregate, have successfully boosted the reputation of the madrasah institution in the eyes of the wider community.

Qualitative data collection involved structured interviews with four students actively studying the MHQ extracurricular material. The research participants included Erlin from class 8D, Abdurrahman Maulana representing class 7A, Raissa Zafira from class 7B, and Cahaya Safitri representing class 8C. The four key informants provided authentic narratives about the program's internal dynamics and its residual impact on their daily character profiles.

A data reduction matrix classified the interviewees' testimonies into a map of supporting factors and inhibiting constraints on the development. Erlin and Abdurrahman unanimously highlighted the religious learning environment, intensive mentoring during murajaah (religious

study sessions), and the development of discipline as the program's key strengths. These two middle-level students reported no significant friction or obstacles during their time in the program.

Raissa and Cahaya complemented their findings by outlining the reality of technical obstacles that commonly occur in the initial memorization phase. Difficulty locking in memory of specific verse sequences requires students to take the initiative to review their memorization at home. The high level of patience required during this lengthy process often presents a mental challenge for participants just adapting.

The quiet classroom environment, free from the culture of rushing, instills a sense of psychological security for all participants. This supportive learning environment successfully reduces the potential for anxiety in children as they struggle to commit Arabic text to permanent memory. The instructor's focus on precision in tajweed (recitation) rather than speed in achieving a target memorization quantity fosters self-confidence in students with slow memorization abilities.

The challenge of memorizing verses has transformed into a platform for students to develop their mental toughness. The demands of memorizing require students to engineer their study schedules outside of school to balance their academic workload with their murajaah (religious study) obligations. This habit of managing personal responsibility instills the seeds of independence that take root deeply in the students' personalities.

The two-way communication between instructor and students during the verse recitation sessions fosters a strong culture of respect. The teacher's gentle guidance encourages students to replicate similar communication etiquette when interacting with other members of the school community. Obedience to the etiquette of holding the Quran gradually reshapes the way students show respect for their elders.

Regular involvement in the MHQ extracurricular program established a positive causal correlation with students' discipline index. Participants in this program were significantly more compliant with their daily schedules and demonstrated superior dedication to completing their assigned targets. Students who did not participate in the MHQ program generally adhered to standard school rules, but they missed out on the opportunity to experience the mental toughness that comes with the pressure of memorizing targets.

The ritual of publicly reciting memorization builds a strong sense of self-confidence in a child's psychological profile. Practicing coping with anxiety during a live evaluation by a mentor trains students to control their emotions and produce fluent verbal communication. This kind of experience fostering mental stability is rare for students who haven't been immersed in a culture of scriptural education.

Regular interaction with holy verses instills moral doctrine that significantly transforms children's daily behavior. Graduates of the MHQ program emerge wiser in the face of adversity, possess greater empathy for their peers, and demonstrate measured politeness. These changes in personality structure confirm the effectiveness of the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an as a highly valid character-building tool for madrasah students.

The Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an extracurricular activity at MTs Central Jakarta runs systematically every Saturday. This weekly routine includes morning assembly, memorization coaching sessions, measured breaks, practical materials, and a closing evaluation. This structured

program has successfully led several student delegates to win championships in various memorization competitions held at the city-wide Madrasah Tsanawiyah Working Group level.

The development of student character is realized through a combination of habituation methods, teacher role models, consistent murajaah (religious study), and a healthy competitive climate. Students participating in the program demonstrate improved discipline, responsibility, patience, and independence that are far superior to those of non-participating students. The habit of regularly interacting with the Quranic text fosters politeness and emotional calm in responding to the dynamics of daily activities (Dyer, 2023).

The success of instilling these ethical values is strongly supported by the highly religious atmosphere of the madrasah and the guidance of instructors who prioritize patience. Operational obstacles that arise are limited to internal student difficulties in memorizing certain verses and the high demands for independent murajaah (recitation) at home (Hasanudin, 2024). External inhibiting factors were proven not to be dominant, ensuring that the main objective of developing noble morals through the memorization program was still achieved optimally (Olmos-Gómez, 2025).

Previous studies, such as those by Sahrir and Al Iza, focused their analysis on the effectiveness of Islamic religious education within the mandatory intracurricular curriculum. This field research takes a different approach by examining a specific extracurricular activity, the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an, as a central medium for instilling ethical values. Non-formal approaches outside of class hours have been shown to hold equally significant potential for transforming students' behavioral and personality structures (Shamsaei, 2025).

Takdir's academic publication uses guidance and counseling services to measure the progress of improving students' morals in schools. Current research demonstrates that intensive interaction with the holy text of the Quran in extracurricular activities can produce a highly similar behavioral corrective effect. Memorization routines foster internal self-control mechanisms in children's psyches without necessarily requiring specific psychological guidance interventions (Amilda, 2023).

Classical literature on values education generally emphasizes macro-theoretical analysis of moral crises and the integration of Sufi values. A case study at a Central Jakarta Islamic Junior High School (MTs) offers qualitative empirical evidence of real-world practices related to the direct instillation of morals through a specific activity unit. The fully captured perspectives of students provide a new dimension to the operational effectiveness of religious programs in densely populated urban areas.

Field findings provide a strong signal that Quran memorization activities should not be reduced to mere cognitive competitions between students. The long and tiring process of memorizing holy verses actually serves as a crucible for forging children's patience, discipline, and mental toughness. The essential value of this program lies in the transformation of participants' daily behavior, not simply the number of surahs they have mastered for the competition (Yani, 2023).

The success of this character-building initiative reflects the urgency of creating a highly supportive madrasah ecosystem free from excessive mental stress. Instructors who prioritize compassion and role models have proven more successful in instilling compliance without resorting to physical or verbal punishment. A learning environment that recognizes every small step of progress fosters a strong sense of self-confidence within students' psychological profiles (Junaidi, 2024).

Students' absolute need for independent study outside of the school schedule demonstrates the real limitations of formal educational institutions' authority to supervise children. Comprehensive moral development requires continuous supervision and guidance from parental figures within each individual household. The institutional success of madrasas must always be accompanied by a strengthening of the systemic role of the family so that shifts in ethical values are permanently rooted in children's memories (Muhaemin, 2023).

Educational institution management is obligated to make extracurricular religious activities a central pillar of the school's character-building agenda. The focus of development must boldly align the ambition of winning competitive championships with the sacred mission of developing moderate Islamic personalities in students (Munawir, 2025). The internal extracurricular curriculum needs to be redesigned to ensure that all aspects of the values of patience, discipline, and responsibility are fully internalized through routine evaluation procedures (Obaid, 2024).

Educators bear the crucial burden of continuously improving their pedagogical competency when assisting groups of people memorizing holy scriptures in the field. Teachers are required to be adept at developing engaging guidance strategies to minimize mental burnout when students encounter a dead end in the memorization process. A psychological approach that places a strong emphasis on exemplary behavior must always be prioritized as the primary instrument for disciplining program participants (Lingo, 2023).

Parents bear an unspoken moral responsibility to reproduce the religious climate of the madrasah within the family room ecosystem. Consistent guidance during children's evening independent recitation practices is key to maintaining memorization volume and fostering stable, polite behavior. Proactive communication between parent representatives and supervising teachers is essential to accurately monitor children's moral development (Kurniawan, 2025).

The cognitive activity of memorizing holy verses naturally demands a high level of concentration and dedication to time management. Students are indirectly forced to subdue their laziness and independently manage extra study time, breaking up their daily school routine. This pressure of internal responsibility slowly rebuilds their neural structures, their discipline, and their fighting spirit, to the point where they surpass those of the average regular student (Ghalib, 2025).

The sacred text of the Quran carries a theologically charged spiritual energy that radiates an extraordinary calming effect on the psychological state of its readers. This daily, solemn interaction with divine words trains children's emotional regulation centers, enabling them to respond to various social pressures with greater wisdom and minimal anger. The sacred and orderly learning environment also conditions students' subconscious to continually recalibrate their verbal politeness (Zakharov, 2024).

The dynamics of social interaction within the MHQ group facilitate the smooth transfer of moral values through the routine of the chain memorization method. The practice of listening to each other's readings unconsciously fosters a sense of empathy, an attitude of respect for differences, and a tradition of very healthy academic collaboration. The culture of positive appreciation that instructors foster when students achieve memorization targets successfully validates their sense of self-worth in the social realm (Brotherhood, 2025).

Madrasah policymakers need to rationally consider the idea of increasing the duration of extracurricular tutoring hours during weekend sessions. The foundation must ensure the provision of a dedicated, quiet, soundproof discussion room to ensure optimal concentration for all participants. Capacity-building workshops on various teaching methods for supervising

religious teachers should be scheduled periodically at the beginning of each academic semester (Poponea, 2023).

Educational practitioners in the field are required to formulate authentic assessment instrument designs capable of capturing the transformation of moral indicators quantitatively and through qualitative narratives. Socializing forums between school committee members and teaching staff must be intensified in a structured manner to synchronize the rhythm of memorization at school and at home. Parents must be educated to create special reading corners at home that are fully dedicated to their children's daily religious activities (Syabuddin, 2026).

Future educational scientists face the academic challenge of expanding the scope of study samples to include madrasas in rural, peri-urban areas. A longitudinal observational experimental design is urgently needed to validate findings related to the moral retention rate of MHQ program graduates as they enter adulthood. Sharp correlational research between memorization fluency and mental health stability metrics in adolescents offers a highly prospective area for scientific exploration.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an extracurricular program has proven to function not only as an arena for academic memorization competitions, but also as an effective medium that transforms students' daily behavior through the direct instillation of values of discipline, responsibility, and patience. This study provides a new conceptual contribution by positioning non-formal religious programs outside of class hours as the main instrument for character formation, in contrast to the majority of previous studies that focused more on analyzing the effectiveness of mandatory intracurricular learning or counseling guidance. The main limitation of this qualitative research lies in the scope of the case study area and the specific sample of participants, so that future educational scientists really need to design a large-scale longitudinal study to verify the level of moral retention of program participants as they enter the maturity phase.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

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